

Testimony Regarding

S.B. 291: An Act Concerning Certain Protections for Group and Family Child Care Homes,

H.B. 5204: An Act Concerning a Needs Assessment and Fair Share Plans for Municipalities to Increase Affordable Housing,

S.B. 302: An Act Concerning Housing Development in the State, Establishing a Housing Authority Resident Quality of Life Improvement Grant Program and a Housing Choice Voucher Task Force, and Requiring the Disclosure of Certain Natural Person Ownership Interests in Real Property,

S.B. 298: An Act Establishing the Urban Homeownership Loan Fund,

S.B. 299: An Act Establishing a Task Force Concerning the Use of The State-Administered General Assistance Program to Address Homelessness,

S.B. 300: An Act Concerning a Study of Excessive Rent Increases,

S.B. 296: An Act Eliminating the Requirement to Store the Personal Property of Evicted Tenants

H.B. 5345: An Act Concerning Security Deposits, and

H.B. 5347: An Act Concerning the Review of Criminal Histories for Prospective Tenants

Joint Committee on Housing
March 10, 2022

Dear Senator Lopes, Representative Williams, Senator Anwar, Representative Smith, Senator Cicarella, Representative Polletta, and esteemed members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Eli Sabin, and I am testifying today on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based child advocacy organization working to ensure that one day Connecticut is a thriving and equitable state where all children achieve their full potential.

Connecticut Voices for Children is testifying in support of

S.B. 291: An Act Concerning Certain Protections for Group and Family Child Care Homes,

H.B. 5204: An Act Concerning a Needs Assessment and Fair Share Plans for Municipalities to Increase Affordable Housing,

S.B. 302: An Act Concerning Housing Development in The State, Establishing A Housing Authority Resident Quality of Life Improvement Grant Program and A Housing Choice Voucher Task Force, And Requiring the Disclosure of Certain Natural Person Ownership Interests in Real Property,

S.B. 298: An Act Establishing the Urban Homeownership Loan Fund,

S.B. 299: An Act Establishing a Task Force Concerning the Use of The State-Administered General Assistance Program to Address Homelessness, and

S.B. 300: An Act Concerning a Study of Excessive Rent Increases.

Connecticut Voices for Children is testifying in opposition to

S.B. 296: An Act Eliminating the Requirement to Store the Personal Property of Evicted Tenants

H.B. 5345: An Act Concerning Security Deposits, and

H.B. 5347: An Act Concerning the Review of Criminal Histories for Prospective Tenants

S.B. 291: An Act Concerning Certain Protections for Group and Family Child Care Homes

Connecticut Voices for Children supports S.B. 291 because it will increase the number of licensed child care providers to help meet the needs of Connecticut’s working families—particularly those with infants and toddlers—by clarifying, enforcing, and expanding housing and zoning protections for licensed group child care and family child care homes.

For Connecticut’s economy to fully recover from the pandemic, parents in Connecticut need access to affordable, reliable, and high-quality child care. Even before the pandemic, though, Connecticut’s early child care infrastructure was inadequate and unable to meet the needs of Connecticut parents. A 2018 report found that 44 percent of Connecticut’s population lives in a “child care desert,” defined as a census tract with “little or no access to quality child care.”

Increasing the availability of home-based child care is an important step we can take to address the lack of affordable child care options across our state. Home-based child care can help alleviate our access and affordability crisis and contribute to Connecticut’s equitable economic recovery. By allowing the child care industry to meet the needs of parents, we will be giving our labor force and economy a boost while also investing in future generations.

Research by Connecticut Voices for Children found that Connecticut's early care industry has been shrinking and losing its capacity to serve young children and their families. In 2003, Connecticut had 89,576 licensed and accredited early care slots for children age zero through five. Early in 2020, CT had 2,055 fewer licensed and accredited early care slots than in 2003. With this loss of slots, the state's infant and toddler slot shortage is now up to 50,000, creating even bigger strains on parents. This shortage is caused, in part, by a steep decline in the number of licensed family child care providers (FCCs). In 2002, there were 3,431 FCCs across the state, and in 2019 there were only 1,890 FCCs.¹

Increasing the number of child care slots is important because family and group child care are essential to building a safe, quality care and education system and growing our economy:

1. High-quality early care options provide essential educational foundations for children.
2. FCCs provide affordable child care options. Working families and families of color, who face the greatest barriers to accessing jobs and care, are more likely to utilize FCCs due to their lower costs, flexible hours, and proximity to homes.
3. Expanding opportunities for FCCs to operate promotes entrepreneurship, especially among women and women of color, and will help create new jobs and local businesses.
4. The early child care industry allows parents to work and grow in their careers.

The academic and learning benefits of quality early child care are well documented. Family and group child care programs are uniquely well-positioned to meet the needs of infants and toddlers, providing safe, nurturing individualized care in a small group setting and providing access to the developmentally appropriate early learning opportunities critical to their healthy growth and development. The benefits of preparing children to learn in school are particularly robust for children from disenfranchised communities.²

In addition to the economic benefits of creating jobs and allowing parents to work, high-quality early child care creates long-term economic benefits for future generations. A significant body of research shows that not being able to access child care explains why many parents are not able to work. In 2016, 27 percent of Connecticut families with children under the age of five had one or more parents outside the labor force. This included 16 percent of single-parent households and 33 percent of two-parent households.³ The pandemic has increased the challenges parents, especially mothers, face in balancing child care and work, making our state's support of early child care even more important.

Despite all the benefits that family and group child care programs provide, many current and prospective providers face housing and zoning barriers that make it difficult to start, maintain, or expand their home-based child care businesses. These barriers are often rooted in systemic

¹ Lee, J. & Ruth, L. (2020). *The state of early childhood: Can Connecticut's struggling family child care providers fill a 50,000 infant and toddler gap amidst the coronavirus recession?* Retrieved from Connecticut Voices for Children: https://ctvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/CRR-SOEC_FCCs_Just-Research.pdf

² Karoly, L. A., & Bigelow, J. H. (2005). *The economics of investing in universal preschool education in California*. Retrieved from The RAND Corporation: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND_MG349.pdf

³ Connecticut Voices for Children Analysis of 2016 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata on Family Type and Employment Status (FES).

racism and discrimination. Home-based providers' challenges in becoming licensed are one of the many ways municipal regulations and zoning laws keep low-income families (and businesses they can work at and afford themselves) out of communities. For a more in-depth review, please see our report, "[Separate & Unequal: The Interactive Effects of Housing and Education Policies on School Segregation in Connecticut](#)," which examines how residential segregation in Connecticut—and educational segregation it creates—persists due to ongoing racial discrimination, current town zoning ordinances, and school district boundaries.

Residents in every town in our state need better access to child care. That's why Connecticut Voices for Children supports **S.B. 291: An Act Concerning Certain Protections for Group and Family Child Care Homes**. By strengthening housing and zoning protections for home-based child care, we'll be providing a safe, nurturing environment for thousands of young children. S.B. 291 will help our kids grow and learn, lower costs for families, and support our economic recovery.

JUST FACTS

- Family and group child care can increase children's educational achievement. Studies show that children who attended preschool experienced higher reading achievement throughout their education, reduced need for special education services, lower likelihood of justice system involvement, higher high school graduation rates, higher earnings at age 27, and reduced use of social services by age 27.
- Making it easier for home-based care providers to operate will have positive economic outcomes for parents, businesses, and taxpayers across the state of Connecticut. One reason for this is that "states with a greater share of women in the labor force consistently have a higher share of children in paid care."⁴
- Connecticut can emulate stronger statutory protections for home-based child care; states across the country, such as New York and California have enacted protections for larger group child care homes that protect them from zoning restrictions and barriers posed by landlords.
- A study conducted by the University of Connecticut's Center for Economic Analysis found that every family child care provider licensed with the support of All Our Kin allowed 4-5 parents to enter the workforce.
- The UConn study found that between 2006 and 2009, family child care providers licensed through All Our Kin created about \$18.4 million in additional tax revenue and generated \$15.2 million in macroeconomic benefits to the New Haven region alone.

⁴ Region Track (2020). *Child Care in State Economies: 2019 Update*. Retrieved from Committee for Economic Development of The Conference Board:
<https://www.ced.org/assets/reports/childcareimpact/181104%20CCSE%20Report%20Jan30.pdf>

H.B. 5204: An Act Concerning a Needs Assessment and Fair Share Plans for Municipalities to Increase Affordable Housing

Connecticut faces a housing crisis that makes our state unaffordable for hundreds of thousands of families, holds back our economy, and reinforces the exclusive policies that have made us one of the most segregated and unequal states in the country. H.B. 5204 is a common-sense reform that is already on the books in neighboring states, and Connecticut Voices for Children urges the Housing Committee to support it to make our state a better place to raise a family, find a job, and start and grow a business.

The “fair share” concept at the heart of this bill is simple: working and middle-income families should be able to live in every town in our state, not just a handful of dense cities, inner ring suburbs, and rural areas. If every town in Connecticut fulfills their responsibility to plan and zone for their fair share of affordable housing, working- and middle-income residents will have many more housing options. Our state will grow, and those U-Haul trucks that have been famously heading out of our state over the past decade will turn around.

H.B. 5204 will create a process that makes sure housing that’s affordable for working- and middle-income families gets built in every town across our great state. For generations, we’ve failed to make sure everyone from teachers and construction workers to cashiers and firefighters can afford to live in most of our state’s towns. This bill will make our state more affordable, opening up new paths for economic growth, educational opportunity, and diverse, thriving communities across Connecticut.

In 2020, 49 percent of renters statewide spent more than 30 percent of their monthly income on housing, a benchmark conventionally used to indicate that a tenant is cost burdened. Just over 50 percent of those renters spend more than 50 percent of their monthly income on housing, indicating a severe cost-burden.⁵ And Connecticut has the 10th highest housing costs in the country. To afford a 2-bedroom apartment at the Fair Market Rent,⁶ an individual would require an hourly wage of \$26.42, or the equivalent of 2.4 full-time, minimum-wage⁷ jobs.⁸ These numbers have only gone up with the current surge in housing costs, and families are feeling the pain of rising home prices and rents.

Research from the Open Communities Alliance shows that Connecticut currently needs to build 137,000 new affordable housing units to keep up with demand.⁹ Without a fair share housing policy, building those units and keeping housing costs down will be nearly impossible.

⁵ Partnership for Strong Communities. (2020). Housing Data Profiles. Retrieved from <https://housingprofiles.pschohousing.org/compare#Connecticut>

⁶ The Fair Market Rent (FMR) is the 40th percentile of gross rents for typical, non-substandard rental units occupied by recent movers in a local housing market. This value is used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in administering various rental assistance programs. However, it is commonly used to represent the average cost for a decent, safe, and sanitary rental unit.

⁷ Minimum wage calculation is based on Connecticut’s 2020 minimum wage.

⁸ Aurand, A., Emmanuel, D., Threet, D., Rafi, I., & Yentel, D. (2020). Out of Reach: The High Cost of Housing [PDF file]. *National Low-Income Housing Coalition*. Retrieved from https://reports.nlihc.org/sites/default/files/or/OOR_2020.pdf

⁹ Kinsey, D. (2020, November). Fair Share Housing Model for Connecticut, 2020 [PDF file]. *Open Communities*

Beyond its impact on housing affordability, a fair share policy would also generate exactly the kind of economic growth and job creation that Connecticut policymakers have been working to bring to our state for decades. According to recent research, passage of this bill would create almost 80,000 jobs and produce \$12.2 billion in state and local tax revenue over the next ten-years.¹⁰ The construction of 100 affordable housing units creates 120 jobs, and the ripple effect of modest population growth would support thousands of new jobs in every sector of the Connecticut economy.¹¹ High housing costs also make it difficult for businesses to recruit and retain employees, and the affordable housing created by fair share would lower costs across the state, attracting both companies and workers to our communities.¹²

Overall, H.B. 5204 would make Connecticut a more family friendly and a more business friendly state. It would help working people afford to live in more of our communities, and it would address decades of discriminatory policies that have trapped our neighbors of color in poverty for far too long. To right these wrongs and put our state on a path to a brighter future, Connecticut Voices for Children urges the Housing Committee to support this bill.

S.B. 302: An Act Concerning Housing Development in the State, Establishing a Housing Authority Resident Quality of Life Improvement Grant Program and a Housing Choice Voucher Task Force, and Requiring the Disclosure of Certain Natural Person Ownership Interests in Real Property

Connecticut Voices for Children supports S.B. 302, which would implement several new and important housing policies in our state. First, we support the creation of a grant program to improve quality of life at housing authority properties. S.B. 302 empowers housing authority property residents, who know best which maintenance issues and quality of life improvements need to be addressed.

Second, we support the bill's call for a study of the Housing Choice Voucher Program and the program's potential disparate impact on at-risk children and families. The Housing Choice Voucher Program is one of the most consequential housing programs operating in Connecticut. With more information, local, state, and federal policymakers will be equipped to improve the program so it better serves families in our state.

Alliance. Retrieved from

https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/opencommunitiesalliance/pages/32/attachments/original/1605542975/OCA_-_Fair_Share_Housing_Model_for_CT_Nov_2020.pdf?1605542975

¹⁰ Open Communities Alliance. (2020). HR 6611: Fair Share Zoning: The Right Thing to Do - and the Smart Thing to Do [PDF file]. Retrieved from

https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/opencommunitiesalliance/pages/763/attachments/original/1615398227/HB_66_11_-_Fair_Share_Zoning_-_Right_Thing-Smart_Thing-2-25-2021.pdf?1615398227

¹¹ Cohen, R. & Wardrip, K. (2011). The Economic and Fiscal Benefits of Affordable Housing [PDF file]. *Planning Commissioners Journal*. Retrieved from <https://plannersweb.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/501.pdf>

¹² Open Communities Alliance. (2020). HR 6611: Fair Share Zoning: The Right Thing to Do - and the Smart Thing to Do [PDF file]. Retrieved from

https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/opencommunitiesalliance/pages/763/attachments/original/1615398227/HB_66_11_-_Fair_Share_Zoning_-_Right_Thing-Smart_Thing-2-25-2021.pdf?1615398227

Third, we support the natural person ownership disclosure requirements in S.B. 302, which will help local and state government hold absentee landlords accountable and make sure maintenance and safety issues at rental properties are addressed quickly and according to the law. This provision, along with the other pieces of S.B. 302, represents a simple and common-sense improvement to state housing law, and we urge the Housing Committee to support the bill.

S.B. 298: An Act Establishing the Urban Homeownership Loan Fund

According to a Connecticut Market Report from Berkshire Hathaway, home prices are up at least 13 percent over the past year.¹³ As prices rise, the dream of homeownership is getting more and more distant for thousands of families across our state, especially families in our urban centers, where housing supply is limited. Connecticut Voices for Children supports S.B. 298, which will enable the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority to work with community development financial institutions to help working- and middle-income residents in our cities buy a home. Affordable homeownership has been shown to help stabilize neighborhoods, and we support this important effort to help more families buy homes in our urban communities.¹⁴

S.B. 299: An Act Establishing a Task Force Concerning the Use of the State-Administered General Assistance Program to Address Homelessness

Given the homelessness crisis in our state and the complexities of the state-administered general assistance program to address homelessness, Connecticut Voices for Children supports S.B. 299, which will give us a better understanding of this important policy. Housing is a human right, and ending homelessness in Connecticut is a moral responsibility. With the additional information provided by this bill, state leaders will be in a better position to make sure that every currently homeless person in our state is able to find a good, safe place to live.

S.B. 300: An Act Concerning a Study of Excessive Rent Increases

According to data from ApartmentList, average rent is up more than 12%, or \$160 a month, in Connecticut over the past year.¹⁵ This huge spike in rent is making it incredibly difficult for families across our state to stay in their houses or apartments. Given this ongoing crisis, it's important that the General Assembly take steps to address surging rents and prevent landlords from taking advantage of the housing shortage to raise rents by unreasonable amounts. This study bill will help us better understand how we can stop excessive rent increases and keep families in their homes.

¹³ Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices New England Properties. "Connecticut Market Report." Accessed March 9, 2022. <https://www.bhhsneproperties.com/connecticut-market-report>.

¹⁴ *Homeownership and the Stability of Middle Neighborhoods*. (2016, August 23). Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco. <https://www.frbsf.org/community-development/publications/community-development-investment-review/2016/august/homeownership-and-the-stability-of-middle-neighborhoods/>

¹⁵ Monk, G. (2022, February 6). *Why rent has risen sharply in Connecticut the past 18 months*. CT Insider. <https://www.ctinsider.com/realestate/article/Why-monthly-rent-has-risen-sharply-in-Connecticut-16835535.php>

S.B. 296: An Act Eliminating the Requirement to Store the Personal Property of Evicted Tenants

Eviction is a traumatic and deeply harmful event in the lives of working people in Connecticut, and it disproportionately impacts Black women.¹⁶ Connecticut Voices for Children strongly opposes S.B. 296, which would make eviction even more painful and impactful for struggling families in our state. The current requirement that the personal property of evicted tenants be stored is a common-sense and humane policy and weakening it would only make it more difficult for our most vulnerable neighbors, who have historically been marginalized and disenfranchised, to get back on their feet after experiencing the devastation of an eviction. We urge the Housing Committee to oppose this legislation, which would hurt working people and make our housing crisis worse.

H.B. 5345: An Act Concerning Security Deposits

Our state's current limits on excessive security deposits help keep housing more affordable and accessible, especially for young people and working-income families. If landlords could require more than two months security deposit, thousands of renters would have fewer housing options just because they don't have thousands of dollars saved up (and even if they have the income to actually pay the rent). Connecticut Voices for Children opposes H.B. 5345, which would make it even harder for working people to afford to live in our state. Especially during the current housing crisis, we need policies that make Connecticut more affordable and accessible, not less.

H.B. 5347: An Act Concerning the Review of Criminal Histories for Prospective Tenants

Current legislation that bars landlords from considering the erased criminal history of prospective tenants is a crucial policy that helps formerly incarcerated state residents build good, stable lives following their involvement in the criminal legal system. Connecticut Voices for Children opposes this short-sighted and harmful bill, which would make it more difficult for formerly incarcerated residents to find safe, quality housing. Finding housing is very important for formerly incarcerated residents because it provides stability, reduces recidivism, and makes it much easier for these residents to find a job and reconnect with family. H.B. 5347 is unfair and would make our communities less safe, and we urge the Housing Committee to oppose it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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¹⁶ Various Authors. (2020). *Issue Briefing Book: 2020-2022*. Connecticut Voices for Children.
<https://ctvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Issue-Briefing-Book-2020-Final-Abridged-Version.pdf>